

This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)



Wayne County plans industrial biotechnology park

Ficano signs agreement with MSU, refinery firm to create center focused on alternative fuels.

[Amy Lee / The Detroit News](#)

April 4, 2006

Wayne County plans to capitalize on the nation's growing interest in alternative fuels by creating a 100-acre industrial biotechnology park this year.

County Executive Robert Ficano on Friday signed an agreement with Michigan State University and Diversified Natural Products Inc., a bio-refinery company, to create a business center for firms that focus on the use and manufacturing of alternative fuels. Delaware-based DNP operates a plant in France that uses an MSU patent to create succinic acid, an eco-friendly product that can substitute for oil in making plastic, among other uses.

The county understands "the need to bring the various technological, corporate and government interests together to work toward reducing the use of petroleum," Paul Jacobson, DNP's CEO, said in a statement.

Ficano announced his intention to lure alternative fuel manufacturers to Wayne County in his State of the County address in March.

The proximity of the Big Three and the availability of a skilled manufacturing workforce make Wayne County an ideal location for a biotech park, he said.

County officials are searching for a site where DNP could build its first U.S. bio-refinery plant to produce alternative fuels, including ethanol, a fuel that can be made from corn and sugar cane. The group hopes a DNP plant would anchor the biotech park, and attract other potential alternative fuel businesses, such as chemical and pharmaceutical companies, to locate at the site.

As part of his biotech push, Ficano also hopes to increase the number of gas stations that sell the alternative fuel E85, a mix of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline.

One of his plans for 2006 is to increase the number of Wayne County gas stations that sell E85 to 20 from one and persuade the Legislature to agree to a zero tax on alternative fuel.

Both General Motors Corp. and Ford Motor Co. recently announced plans to each year build a combined 650,000 vehicles that can run on E85; there are an estimated 5 million vehicles that run on alternative fuels on the nation's roads.

Wayne County also hopes to land tax breaks for biotech companies interested in producing alternative fuels at the biotech park.

You can reach Amy Lee at (313) 222-2548 or alee@detnews.com.